TC 2512

UNITED NATIONS

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General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/39/361
25 July 1984

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-ninth session
Item 108 of the provisional agenda*

QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

Progress report of the Secretary-General

1. Upon assuming my responsibilities at the beginning of 1982, I undertook consultations with the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal with a view to contributing to the improvement of the humanitarian situation in East Timor and to promoting efforts towards a comprehensive settlement of the problem. Following preliminary contacts with the Permanent Representatives of the two countries, I held separate meetings, on 30 April 1982, with Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja of Indonesia and Colonel Vitor Alves, Special Envoy of the President of Portugal.

2. I subsequently requested Under-Secretary-General Rafeeuddin Ahmed to assist me in my consultations with both parties and a team of Secretariat officials was formed, under his direction, to follow relevant developments and explore possible approaches towards a settlement. On 16 June 1982, Mr. Ahmed held informal talks in Singapore with the then-Director-General for Political Affairs of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, on the occasion of the annual Ministerial Meeting of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

3. Mr. Ahmed had an exchange of views, on 29 September 1982, with the then-Foreign Minister Vasco Futscher Pereira of Portugal. On the following day, I met with the then-Prime Minister, Mr. Pinto Balsemao.

4. During its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly considered the question of East Timor and adopted resolution 37/30 on 23 November 1982. The text of the resolution was subsequently transmitted to the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal.

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* A/39/150.

5. On 3 December 1982, I held separate consultations with Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja of Indonesia and Mr. Paulo Marques, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Portugal. Later, in the course of a visit to Lisbon in April 1983, I had an exchange of views on the matter with President Ramalho Eanes and the then-Prime Minister of Portugal. On 24 May 1983, I had further discussions with the Foreign Minister of Indonesia and, in the course of the next two months, I and Mr. Ahmed met separately on several occasions with the Permanent Representatives of the two countries.

6. As a result of this process of consultations, contacts were initiated between Indonesia and Portugal in July 1983, through their Permanent Representatives in New York.

7. The initiation of these direct contacts led me to submit to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly a note (A/38/352), dated 19 August 1983, in which I stated that, in view of recent developments regarding the question of East Timor, I did not consider it opportune to submit a substantive report on my efforts to contribute to a comprehensive settlement of the problem to the General Assembly at that time.

8. On the recommendation of the General Committee, the Assembly subsequently deferred consideration of the item and decided, on 23 September 1983, to include it in the provisional agenda of its thirty-ninth session (decision 38/402).

9. During the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, I actively pursued my contacts with both sides. On 19 September 1983, I had discussions on the matter with President Eanes and Foreign Minister Jaime Gama of Portugal. I also met with Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar on 6 October 1983. Later in conjunction with his participation in international conferences in Bangladesh and Morocco, Mr. Ahmed had consultations with Foreign Minister Mochtar, on 8 December 1983 and 14 January 1984, respectively. On 22 February 1984, he had a further meeting with the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, in Brunei Darussalam, on the occasion of the celebration of its first national day.

10. On 16 March 1984, I had an extensive exchange of views with Prime Minister Mário Soares of Portugal and I met with Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar on 9 April 1984. In conjunction with a mission to South-East Asia, Mr. Ahmed also met Foreign Minister Mochtar and other senior Government officials in Jakarta between 8 and 10 May 1984. I subsequently met with Mr. Jaime Gama, Foreign Minister of Portugal, on 28 May 1984. Since that date, I have continued to follow closely the developments relating to East Timor and pursued my contacts with both sides in New York. Most recently, Mr. Ahmed attended the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting at Jakarta, where he had a further opportunity to exchange views with Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar on 11 July.

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11. Since early 1982, I have periodically raised with the Indonesian Government the question of facilitating the activities of the international humanitarian organizations engaged in providing assistance and protection to the people of East Timor.

12. In April 1982, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Indonesian Red Cross agreed to initiate a special project of basic services for children, mothers and their families in East Timor. This project, which has been implemented since June 1982, is an integrated nutrition, primary health care and community development operation. Thirty-three villages, with a total population of about 45,000 people, scattered over seven subdistricts, have been covered during the last two years and it is expected that the project will be extended for a period of 12 months, as from July 1984. During the last year, UNICEF project staff have visited each subdistrict once a month for the purpose of monitoring the programme implementation.

13. In co-operation with the Indonesian Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) undertook in September 1979 a food and medical assistance programme in East Timor, which was extended to the island of Ataúro at the beginning of 1982. The implementation of the programme was monitored through evaluation missions carried out by ICRC representatives at regular intervals, until the end of 1982. In the first part of 1983, ICRC was unable to proceed with its regular evaluations for the purpose of subsequent distribution of aid. It consequently decided in July 1983 to suspend its participation in the assistance activities on the main island.

14. In the field of protection, the Indonesian Government agreed at the end of 1981 to allow delegates of ICRC to visit detention centres in East Timor and Ataúro. Two such visits were carried out in February and November 1982, when ICRC delegates were able to meet with the displaced persons on Ataúro island and with a number of detainees in Dili and Los Palos on the main island. An agreement was reached, early in 1983, to extend the visits to other detention centres in East Timor, but implementation was subsequently deferred at the request of the Indonesian authorities.

15. Following these developments, I discussed the situation with Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC, at a meeting in Geneva on 2 August 1983. In our subsequent contacts with the Indonesian Government, I and Mr. Ahmed raised the matter, with a view to encouraging a full resumption of the ICRC's activities in East Timor. ICRC has been kept informed of these contacts.

16. As a result of negotiations held between the Indonesian authorities and ICRC, an agreement was reached, in December 1983, on the resumption of ICRC's protection activities on the main island in four stages, to be implemented between March and October 1984, and whereby the visits would gradually be extended to all detention centres. The first stage was completed in March. The second stage of the visits took place in June and it is my sincere hope that the rest of the programme will be carried out as agreed.

17. With regard to relief assistance on the main island of East Timor, ICRC has expressed its willingness to resume it on the basis of the standard criteria for such operations. In this context, it should be noted that ICRC's relief assistance activities to the displaced persons on Ataúro island have continued without interruption.

18. A family reunion/repatriation programme to Australia and Portugal, established by ICRC in December 1979, has also been actively pursued throughout 1983 and during the first part of 1984, in co-operation with the Indonesian Red Cross. Until recently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) contributed financially to the repatriations to Portugal, on the basis of an agreement concluded with ICRC in March 1980. UNHCR was also involved, in early 1982, in the movement of a number of persons from East Timor to Cape Verde.

19. The improvement of the humanitarian situation of the people of East Timor remains one of my primary concerns and I shall continue my endeavours towards that end.

20. The contacts established between Indonesia and Portugal in July 1983 have been held in New York at regular intervals and both parties have expressed to me their willingness to continue the present process. For my part, I wish to reiterate my readiness to be of assistance to the two Governments, with a view to achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem.